



[Jetline](#), a South African franchise chain of copy-shops

Copy Shops, Distribution and Markup

Copy-shops allow people access to printing on demand in urban centres and in some small rural towns.

Copy-shops are usually based on the use of photocopiers (Xerox process). Nowadays, these machines can print direct from an electronic file, which can be sent to the print-shop by e-mail, or brought to the shop on a thumb-drive (flash drive) or on a CD, or downloaded by the shop from a web site.

Customers pay per copy. It means that they can order and get what they can afford.

Copy-shop Agitprop

Copy-shops open the door for small, local organisations to get into print and become autonomous producers of hard-copy agitprop material. These may include pamphlets, political education booklets, and publicity fliers.

Distribution and Markup

You may be limited to what you can pay for, and you may have to give out your material to the public free. A proportion of your output, and maybe most of it, will always be of this kind.

It is one among many ways to project your agitational propaganda.

But what you can also do is to produce for sale to other sellers. That is to say, you can get hawkers to sell your material, if you give them the possibility of making a profit. This is where you have to use the principle of “Mark-up”. In business, most commodities are “marked up” from the purchase price to the sale price by at least 50%, which will give the business a gross profit before expenses of 33%. Sometimes the markup is 100%, giving a gross profit of 50% of the selling price.

It is no good to give a hawker a 10% markup. That is not enough.



18th Century girl selling pamphlets from a basket

You, too, need a markup, to make the business swing. There is no such thing as “break even”. If you aim for “break even” you will lose money.

Let’s say an 8-page document, printed in booklet form, costs R2 from the copy-shop. You can mark it up by 50% for yourself and sell it to a hawker for R3. The hawker can mark it up by 67% and sell it for R5.

Remember that the hawker must travel, eat, and find the customers. At the above rates of return, it is possible that a hawker could survive, if the material sells.

The advantage of this is that everything is paid for and it spreads by itself.

Don't forget that the value of the material in the product was also made by labour, as much as the physical object was. So it is up to you to give value by making sure that the content is good.

Paperight

Paperight was a South African web site that promoted the idea of using copy-shops as publishers. It was not successful, mainly because its catalogue is difficult to browse. [Paperight has folded.]

- The above is the third of three introductory texts that are compiled into a printable booklet, ["Layout, Fliers, Pamphlets, and Copy-shop Agitprop"](#).
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